

# Delaware State Parks accepting applications for the 2016/2017 Veterans Conservation Corps

*Applicants must be members of the military, veterans or family members*

**DOVER** – DNREC's Division of Parks and Recreation announced today that applications are now being accepted for the 2016/2017 Veterans Conservation Corps – an AmeriCorps National Service program. This year, the program has been awarded an increase in funding, from five member positions last year to 15 member positions this year.

Under the program, members commit to a year of service in Delaware's 16 state parks, and receive a bi-weekly stipend, health insurance, child care assistance and an education award. They must be at least 18 years old and an active military member, immediate family member of an active military member or military veteran. The program begins Oct. 1, 2016 and runs through Aug. 31, 2017.

The Veterans Conservation Corps was put into place in state parks last year to promote, protect and conserve Delaware's natural wonders and create meaningful opportunities for millions of visitors to Delaware State Parks. Since then, more than 150 miles of trails have been improved and invasive species have been eradicated in more than 200 acres of park land.

The Veterans Conservation Corps is an AmeriCorps National Service Program focused on engaging military veterans and/or military family members in environmental stewardship activities and trail work throughout Delaware State Parks.

Members will work as a team under the direction of a team leader and receive training, certifications and hands-on experience that can help members gain the skills and experience necessary for employment in the natural resources field.

The program is funded by a three-year nationally competitive grant from the Corporation for National and Community Service, the Governor's Commission on Community and Volunteer Service, and the State Office on Volunteerism. The program proved to be so successful in 2015, the Division of Parks and Recreation requested an increase in members for years two and three. Based on the outcomes and proven success of the first year, the Division was awarded the increase from five members to 15 members for the 2016/2017 program with an increase in funding from \$64,192 to \$187,927.

During their year of service, members will receive education, hands-on training and certifications in outdoor environmental conservation efforts which may provide the necessary skills and experience for a career in natural resources. Members will work as part of a team eradicating invasive species, performing trail construction and maintenance, and park projects throughout Delaware State Parks. Two teams will be located in New Castle County and another two teams in Kent and Sussex counties.

"This program is one of the first such veteran-focused programs based in a state park system in the country," said Delaware State Parks Director Ray Bivens. "This past year we piloted the program and it was so successful, our competitive grant funding tripled for the program for this year. Our team accomplished so much in the last 12 months and will leave a legacy on our state parks and visitors for generations to come."

Those interested and eligible can apply online at [www.destateparks.com/veteranscorps](http://www.destateparks.com/veteranscorps) or applicants can contact

Karen Minner at 302-739-9208. Applications are available until slots are filled.

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